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## DIRECTORATE: CORPORATE COMMUNICATION & IT

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### FEATURE ARTICLE

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#### **TOURISM AS A TOOL USED TO PROPEL SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE IN THE BOKONE BOPHIRIMA PROVINCE.**

Tourism together with Agriculture and Culture have been pronounced as the three economic pillars tasked to propel sustainable economic growth in the province by the fifth administration led by the North West Premier Supra Mahumapelo. Among the trio the Department of Tourism was then mandated with ensuring that the province becomes a preferred tourist destination to influence practical and tangible socio-economic change aligned with government's general agenda.

In realizing the goal, the provincial government separated Tourism from other economic components of government to make it a stand-alone, which made it a unique case in the country. The Department was then mandated to reposition and rebrand the province in order to stimulate increased domestic and international tourism traffic and further increased tourism business investment and transformation within the sector. This includes creating sound public and private sector partnerships and also manifesting a change within the tourism sector in the province

Speaking during The New Age Business Briefing on Agriculture, Culture and Tourism (ACT) held recently at the Rio Casino Hotel in Klerksdorp, Member of Executive Council at the helm of this seemingly well-oiled machine, MEC Desbo Mohono said that although the department is only just over a year and few months old, tremendous progress has been recorded within the sector. "Since our inception we have held district wide consultative engagement sessions which then culminated to our Provincial Lekgotla where tourism industry key role players were able to make



tangible inputs in the planning and crafting policy regulating the sector going forward”, she said.

“With the amount of deliverables we have put out, one might disagree that this department is only one year and few months old. The department has played a pivotal role in ensuring adequate and much needed economic stimulation in our villages, townships and small dorpies while also promoting and marketing various rare and hidden jewels which the province have to offer to the rest of the world. This has also allowed us to heed government’s call to job creation, elimination of poverty and the creating an inclusive economy through integrated local and international relations”, she added

The department has embarked on various marketing activations and also supported some economically game changing projects while taking in its stride some of the most daring partnerships with local small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and also formed partnerships with some of the biggest brand properties in the private tourism sector.

Through the A Re Yeng Bokone Bophirima brand property, an aggressive marketing platform created to market and sell the province, the department has managed to market and promote the province at some of South Africa’s prominent platforms like the Cape Town International Jazz Festival, the Durban Tourism Indaba, Meetings Africa Travel Show, the Durban July Weekend and also partnered with major brand properties through their own brand property like the South African Music Awards (SAMMAs) and ensured that the province remains home of these awards.

The Acting Head of Department, Charles Ndabeni shared the same sentiments with MEC Mohono saying that, it is important to create partnerships between the public and private sector as this will allow for direct input in changing the lives of ordinary people in the province.

“The phenomenon of promoting Villages, Townships and Small Dorpies (VTSD) as pronounced by Premier Mahumapelo is the epitome of direct economic input and in



order for this to be a success we need to partner with those in sector so that as government we can create a value chain which yields desired impact on our economy. The narrative has to change and we have to see serious socio-economically driven change through tourism prosperity in small dorpiess like Bray where there is an annual horse race with a different Kalahari experience. Village towns like Taung also have great potential of becoming the hub of culture and heritage tourism because it boosts such untainted cultural norms and practices. There is also a great deal of preservation of our heritage in that part of our province”, said vivacious HOD Ndabeni.

The Department has recently announced that it has completed three key strategies which will see the tourism sector moving to greater heights and ensure adequate promotion and marketing of events, heritage and cultural tourism. The three key strategies are the provincial tourism sector strategy, the provincial heritage and cultural tourism strategy and the provincial events tourism strategy. These strategies will simply allow the department as the custodians of tourism in the province to have a direct input in the regulation of tourism business in the province.

Among other milestones the department recently solidified its partnership with the Republic of Botswana and the Bokone Bophirima Province. Botswana serves as a gateway into the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and through this partnership the province will have access to other SADC markets and also open its corridors to trade with other Southern African countries

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